UNITED NATIONS

TCDC

Technical cooperation among developing countries

Distr.
LIMITED

TCDC/10/L.3/Add.2
8 May 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON THE REVIEW
OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
Tenth session
New York, 5-9 May 1997

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

IV. SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL DEBATE

C. Progress in the implementation of the new directions strategy for technical cooperation among developing countries

1. Many delegations reiterated their full commitment to the new directions strategy for TCDC endorsed by the High-level Committee in its decision 9/2 adopted at its ninth session in 1995. One delegation noted that the new directions provided a new boost to TCDC and served as a "philosophical compass" for the implementation of TCDC in the current international economic and political climate. In that regard, a large number of delegations supported closer operational integration between TCDC and ECDC. Another delegation noted that TCDC was not merely a modality of cooperation, but also a philosophy of self-help and a means to empowerment of the South, and was part of a larger development paradigm involving national development efforts and establishing appropriate international synergies.

2. A number of delegations reported on their TCDC activities relating to the implementation of the new directions strategy. On the one hand, some delegations, particularly those representing countries in East, South-East and South Asia, Latin America and Africa, with relatively large bilateral TCDC programmes offered to other developing countries, provided information on the different types of TCDC activities they had implemented with other developing countries, both in their region and in other regions.

3. On the other hand, a number of delegations pointed to continuing constraints that had hampered full implementation of the new directions strategy. One critical constraint had been the lack of adequate financial resources, both from national budgets and from traditional sources of development assistance to support TCDC activities and another was the ineffective functioning of TCDC national focal points.

4. The concept of pivotal countries, expounded by the new directions strategy, featured in the debate. A number of delegations sought clarification on the special arrangements contemplated by the Special Unit for TCDC to assist the pivotal countries to serve as catalysts for further promotion and application of TCDC. One delegation suggested a meeting of the selected pivotal countries in order to clarify the position and prepare an action plan.

5. Many delegations commended the establishment of the Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and hoped that it would meet a part of the resource gap that inhibited greater TCDC and ECDC. They appealed for increased contributions to the Trust Fund by donor countries as well as by more advanced developing countries.

6. Some delegations reported that the lack of access to information on capacities of other developing countries and the lack of knowledge of TCDC mechanisms were important constraints that need to be overcome in order to realize fully the potential of TCDC. In that connection, a number of delegations also requested the United Nations development system to assist them in a more proactive manner in integrating TCDC into the development activities supported by the agencies and organizations.

7. Some delegations commended the United Nations agencies that had supported TCDC activities through access to information and TCDC funding schemes. The Special Unit for TCDC was commended for its catalytic financial support for TCDC activities in many areas of priority of developing countries. It was particularly encouraged to continue its efforts in expanding the information on capacities of developing countries contained in the TCDC Information Referral System (INRES) and its plan to develop a multi-dimensional TCDC database to contain information on experts, centres of excellence and successful and replicable TCDC experiences and best practices in the agreed areas of focus.

8. A number of delegations supported the expansion of triangular cooperation arrangements. It was specifically suggested that regional and international financial development institutions should also participate in the triangular cooperation arrangements. Many were of the view that this form of cooperation offered real possibilities in addressing their development priorities.

9. Some delegations recalled that TCDC or South-South cooperation involved an important principle of shared cost by the developing countries themselves. Implementation of South-South cooperation in its many forms was ultimately the responsibility of the developing countries.

10. Finally, some delegations expressed the view that it would be useful if some further guidelines were provided to developing countries on implementing new directions strategy and disseminating them widely to all concerned. Such guidelines might include a definition of roles by Governments, non-governmental

organizations, the private sector and the United Nations development system, and an indication of all possible sources of funds.

D. Case studies of technical cooperation among developing countries experiences

11. In keeping with the decision of the High-level Committee at its ninth session, the Special Unit for TCDC, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee at its ninth session, invited a number of countries and intergovernmental organizations to prepare and present case studies on their experiences in implementing TCDC to the Committee at its tenth session.

12. Accordingly, the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and eight countries, namely, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, China, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Republic of Tanzania, made presentations of their experiences on TCDC to the High-level Committee at its tenth session. The main issues and recommendations that emerged from the presentations of the case studies are summarized below.

13. Although most developing countries had had long-standing bilateral TCDC relations, in the wake of recent trends towards globalization, TCDC was increasingly being recognized as an important instrument for enabling countries of the South to participate effectively in the newly emerging global order.

14. The case studies indicated that developing countries had sought to promote a genuine sense of interdependence among themselves in the understanding that each country had resources and capacities to offer as well as needs to be satisfied by others. In respect of such problems as poverty, unemployment and indebtedness faced by many developing countries, the studies showed that many countries had taken the initiative to formulate clear policies and appropriate institutional arrangements in order to ensure a coordinated approach to those problems within the framework of TCDC.

15. It was emphasized that national focal points played a decisive role in the success or failure of TCDC. In Latin America the national focal points regularly coordinated their policies and programmes on a regional basis and that had contributed significantly to the promotion of TCDC in the region.

16. While stressing the need for self-reliance and solidarity in harnessing the capacities that existed among developing countries, most of the case studies acknowledged that TCDC was a complementary instrument rather than a substitute for North-South cooperation. Therefore, Bangladesh, Senegal, Turkey and other countries favoured broad-based partnerships that included triangular relations with traditional donors and developing countries.

17. Presentations by Brazil, China, Tunisia and Turkey, indicated that the more advanced developing countries had become an important factor in the emerging TCDC partnerships.

18. It was recognized that the promotion of development cooperation among developing countries needed to be made more inclusive by encouraging closer collaboration between Governments, the private sector and the non-governmental organization community.

19. Recognizing the decline in official development assistance, a number of countries called for innovative approaches to resource mobilization among developing countries. For example, China and Turkey had made plans to pool resources by working jointly in organizing workshops and seminars on personnel management and public administration for the benefit of other developing countries. For its part, Brazil had a new mechanism to support TCDC in the form of a cooperation fund designed to benefit States members of the Organization of American States (OAS) that sought Brazilian technical cooperation.

20. The case studies suggested that, as more developing countries became providers of expertise to other countries in the South, the importance of triangular cooperation had become all the more salient in South-South cooperation. For example, France had contributed financial assistance to enable Senegal to provide French language teachers to Gabon and Seychelles.

21. Turkey commended the FAO approach to the use of experts from developing countries while Brazil reported having used that model successfully in various projects on agriculture, forestry and fishing.

22. It was recommended that the TCDC modality should be integrated in the technical cooperation programmes of the United Nations system. To that end, Turkey proposed that closer collaboration should be forged between national TCDC focal points and UNDP country offices. It was also suggested that UNDP projects of selected countries that were ongoing or awaiting approval should be reviewed with a view to identifying the need for experts and training that could be met by utilizing capacities in developing countries. It was also recommended that practical steps be taken to make TCDC the preferred modality in operational activities of UNDP. That could be done by instituting a series of operational guidelines: (a) the decision to use the TCDC modality should be taken at the time of preparing country programmes; (b) TCDC should be inscribed as an item under all major components of any project; and (c) the approval procedure for every programme or project should specifically ascertain the applicability of the TCDC modality.

23. Many countries stressed the need to concentrate development efforts on strategic areas that could have a significant impact on the development prospects of developing countries. In that regard, most case studies emphasized trade and investment, debt, economic management, environment, poverty alleviation, small and medium-sized enterprises, technology transfer, employment creation and the coordination of macroeconomics policy.

24. It was emphasized that capacities and needs-matching exercises supported by TCDC should continue to be demand driven. Moreover it was recommended that the Special Unit for TCDC should continue to monitor the implementation of the agreements concluded among countries participating in such exercises.

25. The case studies on a select number of countries and organizations provided a useful opportunity for the sharing of TCDC experiences in the context of the deliberations of the High-level Committee. The presentations were also welcomed as an important innovation in the organization of the work of the Committee.